

STRATEGY
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**ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM:
WHAT THE STRATEGIC LEADER NEEDS TO KNOW**

BY

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Abstract

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TITLE: Islamic Fundamentalism: What the Strategic Leader Needs to Know

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 16 March 1997 PAGES: 34 Classification: Unclassified

This paper provides an overview for strategic leaders concerning the religion of Islam, fundamentalism, and varying views of this religion. The importance of understanding this religion for strategic leaders is clear: it is the essence of the very lives of one-fifth of the world's population and is a predominant influence in many world areas that involve the strategic interests of the United States.

The purpose of this paper is to provide answers to the following five questions which should interest strategic leaders:

What is the history of Islam?

What are the beliefs of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism?

What is the reason for the staggering growth of Islamic fundamentalism?

Is Islam or Islamic fundamentalism a threat to world order?

Does the United States promote democracy when dealing with Islam?

Finally, this paper presents conclusions and recommendations concerning U.S. policy and perceptions regarding Islam and Islamic fundamentalism.

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Introduction

In a 1990 PBS broadcast titled, Jihad [struggle] in America, Islamic Jihad leader Fayiz Azzam was lecturing at an Atlanta, Georgia gathering. The message to his followers was a prediction of future Islamic extremism:

Allah's religion . . . must offer skulls, must offer martyrs. Blood must flow. There must be widows, there must be orphans. Hands and limbs must be cut, and the limbs and blood must be spread everywhere in order that Allah's religion stand on its feet.¹

On 26 February 1993, a powerful bomb rocked the World Trade Center in New York City. As a result of the blast, six people were killed and least 1,000 others were injured. Within six months, eleven Muslim men, followers of an Egyptian cleric, were arrested for carrying out the bombing of the World Trade Center. Additionally, some of the men were charged with a conspiracy to blow up other New York City buildings, including the United Nations, bridges, and tunnels leading into the city. These men were members of the Islamic Jihad and they were disappointed at the results of their bombing. They had hoped that one of the World Trade Center towers would have collapsed, killing or injuring 100,000 people. Their original plan was to fill the bombs with cyanide to increase casualties, but were forced to abandon this plan since they were unable to obtain the necessary poison. Was this the beginning of Islamic Jihad in the United States and fulfillment of Fayiz Azzam's prediction?

Amos Perlmutter, professor of political science at American University in Washington D.C., believes that Islamic fundamentalism is the gravest threat to the United States today. He states that the World Trade Center bombing was "... only the first in the fundamental assault on America. The target was symbolic, an example of everything [Islamic] fundamentalists see as evil in the West."²

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview for strategic leaders concerning the religion of Islam, fundamentalism, and varying views of this religion. The importance of understanding this religion for strategic leaders is clear: it is the essence of the very lives of one-fifth of the world's population and is a predominant influence in many world areas that involve United States strategic interests. The focus of this paper is to answer the following five questions for strategic leaders:

- What is the history of Islam?
- What are the beliefs of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism?
- What is the reason for staggering growth of Islamic fundamentalism?
- Is Islam or Islamic fundamentalism a threat to world order?
- Does the United States promote democracy when dealing with Islam?

Finally, I will present conclusions and recommendations concerning U.S. policy and perceptions regarding Islam and Islamic fundamentalism.

What is the History of Islam?

Islam was founded in modern day Saudi Arabia in the 7th Century by Muhammad, a native of Mecca. At the age of 40, Muhammad (meaning the blessed one in Arabic) announced revelations from Allah, the one God. These revelations were received through the angel Gabriel and later collected into the *Koran*, the book of Islam. Within 23 years, Muhammad succeeded in establishing the great religion of *Islam* (meaning submission to God). His followers, *Muslims* (those who submit), discarded pagan practices of the day and adopted distinct religious beliefs that continue today.

Soon after the death of Muhammad in 632, the *Majlis al-Shura*, or assembly of advisors to the prophet, selected Abu Bakr, a close companion of Muhammad, as the first of four *Caliphs*, successors to Muhammad. Others rallied around Ali, the Prophet's first cousin and son-in-law,

supporting bloodline succession. Though Abu Bakr only ruled for two years, he fostered the spread of Islam throughout Arabia, and to distances as far as Palestine and Iraq. Furthermore, he placed all areas under the central control of one Caliph.

Ali was rebuffed two more times when Muslims elected Umar and Uthman as the second and third Caliphs. Umar ruled for ten years and continued the policy of Islamic conquest. By the year 637, Islam had spread to Syria, Jerusalem, and Egypt. It was Umar who began the collection of Muhammad's recitations, the Koran. The book of Koran was completed under the third Caliph, Uthman.

Although accused by his adversaries for the murder of Uthman, Ali became the fourth Caliph and moved his capital to Iraq. The governor of Syria, Mu'awiyah (Uthman's cousin), along with members of his powerful Umayyad tribe, refused to accept the authority of Ali. Ali sent his army and defeated Mu'awiyah's forces. Ali was assassinated in 661 by former militant followers.

Ali's son Hasan succeeded him as Caliph but Mu'awiyah convinced the weak Hasan to abdicate. This established Mu'awiyah as Caliph of all Moslems with his capital in Syria. Before his death, Mu'awiyah named his son Yazid, as successor. Ali's youngest son and Hasan's brother, Husayn, rose in rebellion against Yazid. During their final confrontation, Yazid attempted to negotiate unconditional surrender with Husayn, who knew that defeat and death were inevitable. Husayn's "... disregard for pragmatism . . . made him the most revered martyr in Islam."³ The dreadful manner in which Sunni followers of Yasid tortured and decapitated Husayn, as well as the continuous fight over the ruler of the Muslim people, finally culminated in the great schism in Islam.

This schism created the two main branches of Islam: Sunnis and Shiites. Sunnis believed the successor to Muhammad should continue to be democratically elected based on piety and merit. Shiites believed that the successor to Muhammad should be a blood relative of the prophet. Shiites reject Abu Bakr as the first Caliph and succession of Caliphs. Instead, they focused their beliefs on the hereditary line from Muhammad through twelve *Imams*, beginning with Ali. The term *Imams* is derived from the word *Imamate*, which means religious and holy guide and leader. Shiites believe the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Muntazar, who disappeared under mysterious circumstances in 878 AD, will reappear as the *Mahdi*, the messiah, to complete the mission of god on earth. This imperative largely distinguishes the Shia and Sunni dogma. Additionally, the death of Husayn at the hands of the Sunni sect, has given rise to a martyr syndrome that survives today in Shia Muslims. However, both sects remain consistent in their belief in Muhammad and the Koran.

By the 8th century, Muslim rule stretched from its roots in Saudi Arabia to Northern Africa, Spain and India. This rule is known by historians as the Islamic holy war or *jihad*, meaning struggle. Also in the 8th century, a mystical movement called *Sufism* developed in protest against the formal and legal conventions of Islam. The *Sufis* practiced a form of mysticism by withdrawing from the world and seeking a personal relationship with God. This sect remains popular for those who view Islam as a religious versus a political experience.

From the 11th - 14th centuries, Islam made great inroads throughout the modern world and particularly into southern Europe. However, the movement threatened the Christian world and eventually led to the Crusades, an effort to beat back Islam and retake the Christian holyland, especially Jerusalem. Although this effort eventually failed, many believe that the hostilities of

the Crusades was the foundation of the fundamental rivalry between the Islam and Western worlds:

The Crusades left their legacy of enmity between Islam and western Christianity, between the Arab world and the West. Christian intolerance begat Muslim intolerance. The Arab world defeated the Crusaders, but feels dominated by their western descendants. Muslim radicals now call for the Islamic mirror image of a Crusade-Jihad, or holy war, against the West.⁴

In the later middle ages, Islam spread by merchant and trade to central Asia and Indonesia. By the 18th and mid-19th century, Islamic reformism emerged as a result of reaction against European commercial expansion and corrupt practices, especially among organized political groups in the hinterlands of the Muslim world. Muslims believed that they could overcome the intrusion of Europe by adopting European methods to modernize their society.

In the 1920's and 30's, contemporary fundamental movements were invigorated by, Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Abu Ala Mawdudi, the founder of the Jama'at-i Islami in Pakistan. These movements sought to bring the principles of the Koran into practice and reestablish community life espoused by the Prophet Muhammad.

The Muslim Brotherhood was revived in the 1970's and 1980's along with the creation of a new generation of activist movements that thrive today. These movements were fueled in part by the imprisonment and execution of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb was an Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood teacher and leader, who espoused destruction of Israel and a need for spiritual and political revival in the region. These movements focused on rejection of capitalism, fostered a defiant attitude towards Israel and Western culture, and promoted strict adherence to Islamic religious values in public and private life.

By the early 1990's, Sunnis comprised approximately 83% of Muslims worldwide, with approximately 16% Shiite. The Shiite majority are principally located in the Middle East,

particularly in Bahrain, Iran, and Iraq. However, the largest collection of Muslims is in Indonesia with an estimated Islamic population of 155.7 million; second largest Muslim population is in Pakistan with 110.6 million. The total Muslim population is about 970 million people. The United States' Muslim population is approximately 20 million.⁵

What are the Beliefs of Islam?

The function of the human being is to receive, respond to, adopt and apply the immutable characteristics of divine rules. There is no room for the legal and political sovereignty of human beings, individually or collectively.⁶

Muslims worship the same God as Jews and Christians. However, they believe that Islam is the next iteration of the religious prophecy from Allah. First came Judaism followed by Christianity, and finally the enlightened revelations to Muhammad cited in the Koran. The Koran is the direct word from God. Muslims believe that Jesus was a great prophet, but not the son of God:

Muslims believe in the Divine Revelations of many prophets including Abraham, Moses, Jesus The Quran . . . is God's Word and Final Revelation to the prophet Muhammad.⁷

Islam means peace, submission and obedience. The religion of Islam envisions the complete acceptance and submission to the teachings and guidance of Allah as revealed to His Prophet Muhammad. These teachings are summarized in a core set of rules known as the five *Pillars of Islam*.

The first pillar is the declaration of Faith. "There is no god but God! Muhammad is the Messenger of God."⁸ This is the *Shahadah*, the profession of faith that affirms the existence of Allah the one God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and obligation to follow the exemplary life of the prophet. The second pillar is that Muslims are obliged to pray to Allah five times daily

(*salat*). Third, they must give alms or charity to the needy which is called the *Zakat*. The *zakat* is usually 2.5% of one's net savings in a year. Fasting from dawn until dusk during the ninth month, known as *Ramadan*, is the fourth pillar. Finally, Muslims are encouraged to make at least one pilgrimage or *hajj* during their lifetime to Mecca.

Muhammad preached that there is only one, all-powerful, just, and merciful God. People must purify themselves through submission to Allah's will. Allah will judge them on their submissiveness. Allah, through his revelations in the Koran, has provided definite guidelines for people in all walks of life to follow. This guidance is comprehensive and includes all social, economic, political, moral, and spiritual aspects of existence. Man is free in his will, action, and choice but Allah has shown him the right path. The life of Prophet Muhammad provides the perfect example. Additionally, Muslims believe that teachings, narratives, actions, and sayings of the prophet Muhammad, explained in the *Hadith*, compliment and elaborate on Koranic verses.

Fundamentalists believe that Islam provides "... a total system of beliefs and a model for a holy society and government. They see Islam as a comprehensive alternative to capitalism, communism, democracy, and other Western ideological systems, and to the existing regimes in Muslim countries."⁹ Islamic fundamentalism represents a revival in the perceived lapse of traditional religious observances in the modern world. The deterioration of Islamic values is often attributed to western influences which have corrupted tradition and promoted government greed. Muslim fundamentalists believe that corrupt regimes and foreign influences breed injustice in their society, exploits the poor and disenfranchised, subverts the family, and promotes immorality. They remain opposed to political elite who are perceived as corrupt and exploitative, and are pawns of the West. Finally, fundamentalists contend that it is absolutely

essential to assume political control and expel foreign elements to restore order. This action will free them to educate their people and ensure future Islamic religious commitment.

Islamic fundamental movements tend to offer comprehensive solutions to all problems at once. These actions intend to change political regimes, recreate a sense of community, restore morality, revive spiritual values, and reject foreign influences. They stress that it is essential to establish the *Shari'a*, the Muslim holy law and rules of conduct, as the law of the Islamic state.

Radical fundamentalists favor immediate and often times violent revolution, or Jihad, as the primary mechanism for change. "For fundamentalist groups, all those Muslims who do not share their view of Islamic laws are dismissed as infidels. Those Muslims who favor secular governments are called apostates by fundamentalist Muslims, who urge the classical Islamic punishment for apostasy - death . . ."¹⁰

Moderate fundamentalists favor preaching and building of the society from the bottom up. They tie their struggle to the interpretive sayings of the prophet Muhammad, "The most excellent jihad is that for the conquest of self. The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr."¹¹

Moderate and radical fundamentalist groups are often at opposition within Islamic cultures. Differences occur between the two primary Islamic sects, Sunni and Shiite Muslims regarding religious interpretations of intercession with Allah and redemption. Sunnis believe that no one can intercede between Allah and his people. Shiites believe that the Imams, religious leaders, intercede between Allah and mankind. In matters of redemption, Sunnis believe that redemption is dependent on adherence to the faith; a merciful Allah will determine redemption. Shiite Muslims are guaranteed paradise if they obey Muhammad and the Imams. Finally, Sunnis believe that the Twelve Imams and the present day Imams (*Ayatollahs*) are righteous, holy men

without divine powers. Shiites believe their Ayatollahs receive their guidance directly from the Twelve Imams and are divine.

Both Shiite and Sunni fundamental movements “. . . have as a primary objective the establishment of Islamic law as the sole basis of government. They reject secularism as an imported western idea, and are opposed to several kinds of social change that use the west as a model . . . ”¹²

What is the Reason for Growth of Islamic Fundamentalism

One fifth of the world’s population is Muslim and Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world.¹³ Islamic fundamentalism is also on the rise:

It [fundamentalism] generally follows from conditions of extreme poverty, of not finding a job, of feeling blocked, of not being able to lead a normal life. In an era when the ‘isms’ of communism and socialism, even of Arab nationalism, have lost their luster, it is quite understandable that many people return to their religious roots for meaning and values.¹⁴

Fundamentalists are not just returning people to their roots as suggested in the above statement by Mr. Pelletreau, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State. They are capturing the spirit and minds of the poor, young, and disenfranchised people who are the perennial “have nots” throughout the world. More importantly, radical fundamentalists appeal in a more sinister way since they capture the imagination of oppressed peoples:

. . . the militants’ strength is nourished by the alienation of governed to government: stale old regimes . . . [that are seen] as elitist, corrupt, indifferent to underdog privation. Meanwhile, Islamists . . . do admirable social work [and] recruit from this seedbed of disillusion.¹⁵

Many people believe that militant groups are fueled by external radical organizations. However, it is more likely that the appeal of radical fundamentalism increases with rapid

urbanization, increased poverty, collapse of the family infrastructure, and the lack of government programs to remedy many of these social issues. Proponents of Islam seek to redress these social catastrophes by promising a religiously pure society, free from past corruption of current governments. In emergencies, they are generally able to react faster to social needs than their government counterparts:

... [current governments] have failed . . . to develop their societies. Unresponsive, repressive governments—often run by small cliques of insiders . . . are widely hated insofar as they benefit only a handful of people. . . . Extreme poverty, or at best a grossly unbalanced distribution of income, and a lack of educational opportunities have embittered large numbers of people. The breakdown of village, religious, and family institutions under the press of urbanization has intensified . . .¹⁶

In contrast, when radical fundamentalists assume government control, the situation does not seem to improve. In present day Iran, a country ruled by radical Islam since 1979, national output has barely risen above the 1979 level. Additionally, inflation has consistently run at 20-30% while the Iranian rial has lost more than 90% of its value. Corruption and unemployment is rampant.¹⁷

The growth of Islamic fundamentalism, in moderate and radical forms, is predictable. As poverty increases, more people become disenfranchised, expectations continue to outgrow creation of jobs and social services, and governments fail to adequately address the social needs of their people. Islamic fundamentalism steps in and offers alternatives. As Mahmoud Hussein writes, "... the strength of fundamentalism lies in its ability to promise radical change without having to specify its outlines—since God is claimed as its guarantor."¹⁸

Is Islam or Islamic Fundamentalism a Threat to World Order?

Islam inspires fear and fascination in the Western imagination. It calls to mind puritanical holy warriors, fanatics, dervishes, suicide bombers, hijackers, and human waves thrown into battle.¹⁹

The issue of whether Islam or Islamic fundamentalism is a threat to world order is problematic since it is intertwined into several areas. These key areas include linkage of Islam with terrorism and fear that Islam is a monotheistic threat to western culture

Linkage with Terrorism

On 22 January 1995, nineteen Israelis were killed and sixty others were injured when bombs were detonated by two suicide bombers outside a bus stop near Netanya, Israel. The Islamic Jihad of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attack stating, "The Islamic movement gives its condolences to the hero of the attack which led to the killing of 20 pigs and the injuring of 60 . . ."²⁰ The result was worldwide condemnation and comments in the form of the following:

... any appearance or claim by these people to be rational human beings seeking a better kind of world or society is a sham . . . The recent bombings . . . are forever proof of the bankruptcy of virtue and the evil intentions of these people . . . And most important of all, the only choice open to anyone in the United States is between the American Way of Life and Islam's Way of Life . . .²¹

The difference in the two preceding comments illustrates an excellent example of the opposing ends of the political spectrum. The first statement promotes and justifies violence in the name of Islam. It is clearly fundamentalism in its most radical form. The second statement promotes radical suppression of Islam as the source of terrorism. Both approaches are wrong!

It is necessary to distinguish between Islam and terrorism. As with many ideologies, religious beliefs may be taken to the extreme. This is clearly true of Islam. Proponents of violence in the name of Islam are not typical fundamentalists; they are extremists and terrorists. Fundamentalists believe in the return to basic values delineated in the rich history and culture of Islam. Islamic extremists intend to implement this value system through the destruction of current systems. This distinction is appropriately articulated in United States policy by Mr.

Richard Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary of State, “. . . we don’t believe that everybody who says he’s an Islamist falls necessarily in the terrorist category.”²² Islam no more promotes violence and terrorism than does Christianity. However, there are elements in both religions that pursue their convictions through extreme violence. Most importantly, moderate fundamentalists abhor and condemn religious violence. This concept is articulated by Muhammad Hanif in his description of Sunni and Shiite sects:

There is no justification in Islamic scriptures and jurisprudence for indiscriminate killings or assassinations. . . by either Sunni or Shiite Muslims. Violent . . . acts are not Islamic in origin. In fact, radical violence seems to be a worldwide phenomenon. Radical groups, whether religious or not, often flourish in non-democratic environments where injustice, repression, and inappropriate foreign influence are widely believed to be dominant characteristics of the existing order.²³

Islamic Threat to Western Culture

Although there is no evidence that supports the belief of an monotheistic front united against the West, Islam remains a perceived threat to many westerners. This is true for two reasons: visibility throughout the media and promotion by foreign governments.

First and most obvious is the visibility and newsworthiness of Islamic extremist incidents. Pictures of masked gunmen shouting Islamic slogans, parading the streets with AK-47’s blazing in the air is a great thirty second sound bite. These incidents spark the imaginations and fears of Americans who have not forgotten the 1979 seizure of fellow citizens by the same kinds of people who espoused Islam and deposed the Shah of Iran. Although fear of terrorism is certainly warranted, American’s tend to confuse Islam with Islamic extremism in what is being commonly referred to in the current literature as the Green Peril (green is the color that symbolizes Islam).

“Ask American college students, in the elite universities or elsewhere, what they think of when the word ‘Muslim’ is mentioned. The response is inevitably the same: ‘gun toting, bearded, fanatic terrorists, hell-bent on destroying the great enemy, the United States’.”²⁴ Interestingly, the Clinton doctrine on Islam is well-focused on the distinct differences between Islam and terrorism. Former National Security Agency Advisor, Anthony Lake stated:

Islamic extremism poses a threat to our nation’s interests. There are forces which use the cover of Islamic revival to suppress freedom, withdraw from the world, and justify hostilities. These movements threaten the United States and the global community of nations because they speak in a powerful and all too seductive language—the age-old cant of hatred, fear and prejudice.²⁵

The second reason Islamic fundamentalism is viewed as a threat to world order is because the concept is fostered by foreign governments. There are some governments, including allies, who hope to capitalize on the fear of rising fundamental Islam. Many countries, particularly in the Middle East, are fighting the rapid rise and spread of Islamic fundamentalism. In some instances, foreign leaders are fighting for their political lives. Concerned about continued support and commitment by the United States, foreign leaders justify further requests for military aid, economic support, and political backing through the exploitation of the Green Peril. The struggle between the government of Egypt and internal Islamic fundamentalist movements is an excellent example of this theory:

[Mubarak] claims that Egypt desperately needs money to fight the extremists and defends his methods on the grounds that unless stringent measures are taken, Egypt will fall . . . just as sure as Iran fell to Khomeini. What better justification for that aid than an Islamic threat . . . U.S. officials are apt to share Mubarak’s interpretation that the Islamic extremists are the most pressing threat. They see a fundamentalist victory in Egypt as the first and most significant domino . . .²⁶

In summary, we have an historical fear of an Islamic threat and American hostages dating back to 1979, almost daily images of the same threat throughout the world, and foreign leaders

who espouse this threat. The combination of these elements foster the continuation of the Green Peril menace. Finally and most unfortunately, there is a backlash that works against the promotion of Islam and the Green Peril theory:

The false equation 'Islam equals fundamentalism equals terrorism' has its effects on Muslims who have little in common with . . . Islamic fundamentalists . . . [This] caricature of Muslims is seen as an expression of the West's search for a justification to pursue a comprehensive struggle against the entire Muslim world.²⁷

Does the U.S. Promote Democracy when Dealing with Islamic Countries?

When elections stand in the way of securing American security and economic goals, Washington drops its normal rhetoric of 'democratic enlargement'. When countries that oppose the United States on these issues . . . have elections, those elections are . . . seen as undemocratic. There is a pervasive sense . . . that the United States does not support democracy . . . but rather supports what is in its strategic interest and calls it democratic . . . U.S. policy makers should talk much less about democracy in the Muslim Middle East, and do a little more to promote it.²⁸

The final question deals with the issue of democracy and how fairly the United States deals with the Islamic nations on democratic issues.

Although promoting democracy abroad is one of the three central strategic objectives of our 1996 National Security Strategy (NSS) document, mention of this objective is conspicuously absent when applied to Islamic nations.²⁹ For example, the United States routinely deals with monarchies of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco with little regard to promotion of democracy. This philosophy does not appear to be in conflict with any U.S. interest regarding political, diplomatic, economic, or military issues. However, promotion of democracy comes under serious scrutiny when U.S. foreign policy is viewed regarding Egypt and Algeria and their internal handling of Islamic fundamental movements.

International human rights organizations frequently comment on abuses in Egypt particularly in the brutal repression of Islamic fundamentalist groups. President Mubarak's government has been routinely accused of blackmail, torture, and illegal incarceration of fundamentalist dissidents, particularly around election time.³⁰ The key concern of human rights organizations is not that President Mubarak sees the growth of fundamental organizations within his country as a threat to the future of Egypt. It is the manner in which the fundamentalist dissidents are routinely persecuted that has caught world-wide human rights organizations' attention. Despite these abuses, the United States continues to provide political and financial support to the government of Egypt.

A much worse situation of United States disregard for democratic ideals was recently illustrated in Algeria. Islamic fundamentalists, represented by the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) Party, won a broad-based constituency and subsequently the parliamentary elections in 1991. Fearing the potential rise of a fundamentalist majority in power, the Algerian military nullified the elections. Many nations, including the United States ignored the election results and recognized the actions of the Algerian military.³¹ There is clear indication that the FIS movement was once nonviolent and demonstrated pro-democratic tolerance. However once repressed, the Islamic fundamental movement became violent, anti-West, and anti-American.³²

In the particular cases of Egypt and Algeria, the United States ignored democratic ideals in favor of repression of Islamic fundamentalism.

Conclusions

Islam and its fundamental variations provides a basis for return to traditional values and gives hope to the disenfranchised. Islamic political movements, whether moderate or extreme,

will continue to thrive because they espouse agendas that address moral commitment and social reform. Additionally, Islamic political movements will continue to grow dramatically as long as foreign governments fail to address social injustice, declining infrastructures, and socially disenfranchised peoples.

Secondly, the United States will continue to face a future that includes self-determined, representative governments that are Islamic and potentially fundamentalist. In some cases, these governments will be elected by popular vote against those who have been traditional allies. The United States must deal with these countries diplomatically and politically. To ignore these countries will have resounding negative implications on world-wide issues that involve support to the disenfranchised, religious toleration, and terrorism.

This paper discussed differences between Islam, Islamic fundamentalism, and extremism. I believe Islam and Islamic fundamentalism do not pose a threat to democracy. Conversely, Islam works within governments for the improvement of people, their social and family systems. Extremism constitutes a significant threat to all governments, whether Islamic or democratic.

Recommendations

If Americans resent the generalized view of the United States as the 'Great Satan', then we must avoid the pitfalls of a similar attitude toward Islam and moderate fundamentalism. Islam and Islamic fundamentalism are not the Green Peril. Any tendency to view Islamic movements through the prism of Qadhafi and Khomeini have obscured the fact that the majority of Muslims are not radical and do not pose a threat to peaceful people. However, our policy on violent Islamic extremism, is right on target. It states that we do not and should not tolerate terrorism in any form regardless of affiliation.

U.S. policy should de-emphasize military assistance to Islamic governments and tie our support to agricultural and socioeconomic aid in areas such as housing, education, social services, and public works. These are areas that when overlooked, foster radical elements that are inherently unstable to governments and decidedly anti-West. Our policy should focus on social reform and not fundamentalism. Commitment to political Islam does not make one an advocate of violence and terror. It does, however, make one a proponent of change.

The United States should support world-wide freedom of non-violent expression, whether we agree or disagree with the message. Religious freedom and support to those whose convictions differ from our own, has been the strength of America in the past. Yet today, we are viewed as intolerant of Islamic political activists and have supported repression against such movements. Our toleration and support may have a twofold effect: create in our allies the absolute need to support the disenfranchised, and limit the expansion of violent extremist groups and actions.

Finally, when democratic transitions and real elections do occur that brings to power Islamic fundamentalist, the United States must support them, even if their direction at the outset is uncertain.

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¹⁹ Lapidus, 391.

²⁰ "Islamic Extremism," linked from CIC Publications at "General Information," <<http://web.idirect.com/~cic/ie1995.htm>>, 2 February 1997.

²¹ "Danger of Islam Self-Evident," linked from The Wisdom Fund at "General Information," <<http://www.twf.org/Releases/Evident.html>>, 14 December 1996.

²² Pelletreau, 72.

²³ Hanif, 344.

²⁴ "Zachary Karabell, "The Wrong Threat: The United States and Islamic Fundamentalism," World Policy Journal (Summer 1995), 39.

²⁵ Richard Schifter, "Condemn Those Who Advocate Violence," Middle East Quarterly III, no. 3 (September 1996): 47.

²⁶ Karabell, 44.

²⁷ Arthur K. Vogel, "Fundamentalism's Western Helpers," World Press Review 38 (October 1993): 45.

²⁸ Richard W. Murphy and F. Gregory Gause III, "Democracy and U.S. Policy in the Muslim Middle East," Middle East Policy V, No 1 (January 1997): 59.

²⁹ William J. Clinton, "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," Washington, February 1996.

³⁰ Karabell, 44.

³¹ Ibid., 45.

³² Jonathan Power, "The War for Islamic Minds," World Press Review 41 (November 1994): 51. UMI ProQuest, General Periodicals Ondisc, item 02134636.

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